

GENEVIEVE ATWOOD

- i **LIVING**
- i **1st Woman to head Utah's Geological Survey**
- i **1st Woman in the nation to head a Geological Survey**



Photo by Tracy Longley-Cook

In 1981, Governor Scott Matheson appointed Genevieve as the first woman geologist to head Utah's Geological Survey. Geology at that time was almost completely the province of men, or "Rock Jocks." She was the first woman to head a Geological Survey in the U.S. and perhaps the world. With her high-pitched voice and feminine demeanor, she stood out among colleagues at universities, where she has studied and taught, and with fellow lawmakers in the Utah Legislature. Being non-Mormon, a Republican and an advocate for social issues, Genevieve has confused some observers.

Genevieve thinks of her mother as a feminist and father as a parent who believed girls could pursue any profession that boys pursued. Her professional interests put marriage and family secondary and she married late. She and her husband, Don Mabey, share a multitude of common interests. They particularly enjoy Don's grandchildren. Don is both mentor and cheerleader and shares her passion for the earth sciences. Genevieve is currently working on her doctorate at the University of Utah.

As a "first woman" in her field of geology, Genevieve is currently developing a university program to teach elementary school teachers important elements of science. It is designed to make science more stimulating for children.

Genevieve acknowledges many mentors. At the age of fifteen, she left Salt Lake City to study in eastern schools. Prominent business and academic leaders as well as special friends guided her. Robert Hinckley played a unique role. His personal influence and the philosophies of his Hinckley Institute at the University of Utah encouraged Genevieve to pursue her chosen profession and to get excited about public service. "Submit your life to the fun test," he told her.

While still in her twenties, Genevieve was elected to the Utah State Legislature in 1974. Holding a position of political power, being young, female and non-Mormon offered certain advantages. Her colleagues needed support and votes and Genevieve was willing to listen. She gained credibility for her knowledge.

As a woman in her scientific profession, Genevieve faced many challenges. Entry-level jobs in her male-dominated field went mainly to men. Awkward situations developed on required field trips. A man/woman team working together on a survey was a new concept. Regulations did not allow her to work underground. Genevieve's efforts helped improve career opportunities for women in science.

Genevieve admires many of Utah's early pioneer women for their independence. She says, "One of the joys I have

in my life is being a woman — and an active woman --- in Utah.”

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